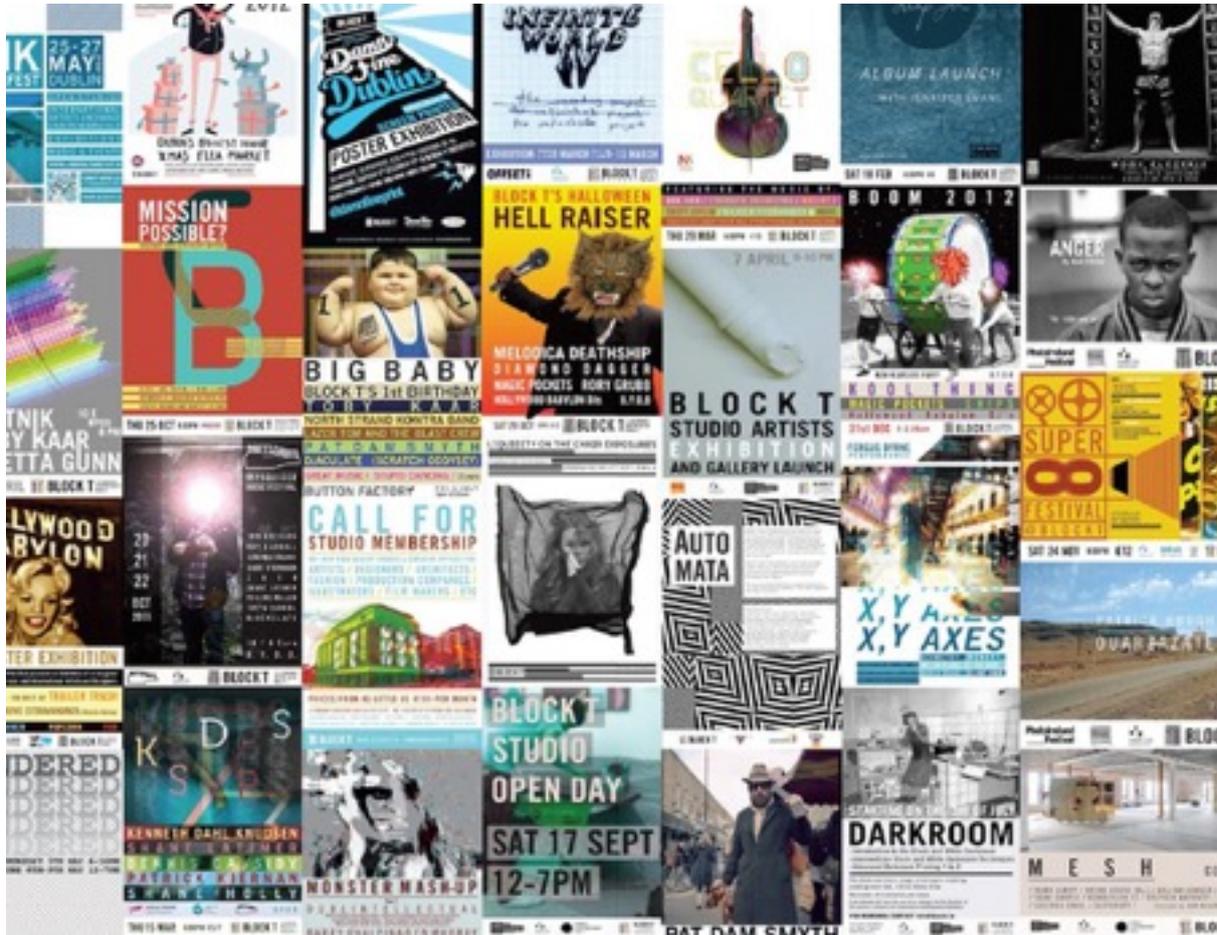


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Ireland's Largest Independent Cultural Space in Jeopardy as the Economy Recovers

This week, the team at BLOCK T are sad to announce to members the date (31st March) they will be vacating their premises in Smithfield, which currently houses over 70 creative studios and workshop facilities. Our organisation is now presented with a new challenge of rehousing their 120 members, who create and produce their work from this hub on a daily basis and have been supported by BLOCK T's independent subsidies since 2010.

Established in the midst of the economic recession, BLOCK T was one of the first creative projects to seize the opportunity of the many vacant spaces in Smithfield, breathing a new

“BLOCK T’s diverse, multi-disciplinary programme offers an eclectic abundance of events, exhibitions, talks and screenings which not only challenges and engages both artists and audiences, but has also paved the way for a future model of art spaces in the city.”

Miranda Driscoll

Former Co-Director

The Joinery



lease of life into the area. When funding was hard to come by BLOCK T provided a new and unique model of operating artist led initiatives and advocating for independently run cultural spaces not solely reliant on public funding.

Our co-founding team worked voluntarily during the start-up years, allowing it to grow into a primarily self funded organisation. This team of creative entrepreneurs collaborated with open-minded landlords, local businesses and arts organisations, and developed a variety social and cultural initiatives over the years, with public funding making up only 2% of its annual turnover.

BLOCK T has played a crucial role in the rejuvenation of the Smithfield area, welcoming over 150,000 visitors throughout the past six years. Alongside its cultural partners such as Lighthouse Cinema, Jameson Distillery, Generator Hostel Dublin, Brown Bag Films, Cobblestone and other old and new enterprises, it has fought the uphill battle to establish Smithfield and its surrounding area as a dynamic cultural destination in the city.

Delivering hundreds of cultural events, from art exhibitions, to festivals, to Christmas markets, to educational programmes, BLOCK T’s network produced millions for the Irish creative industry, as well as establishing jobs in the cultural sector for both its team and members. It also acted as a seeder company for dozens of interns and volunteers who gained invaluable experience as part of their integrated training and work placement programmes in collaboration with national universities.

To date BLOCK T holds an impressive list of accolades, having been the recipient of multiple awards and an instigator of unique partnerships in the city, nationally and internationally. It has facilitated and collaborated with some of Ireland’s finest cultural influencers such as Nialler9, Ensemble Music, Body & Soul, Dublin Flea, Upstart, All City Records, Knockanstockan Festival, Red Bull Music Academy, Darklight Festival, Spirit of Folk Festival, SCOOP Foundation, Hollywood Babylon, Slipdraft, Steve Doogan, Mary Cremin, Sven Anderson, Rhona Byrne, Aoibheann Greenan, Chequerboard, Patrick Kelleher, Alarmist, Meltybrains?, Fringe Festival, Innovation Dublin, Electric Picnic Festival, Bottlenote Festival, and many many more. For these partnerships, BLOCK T provided a much needed platform for creating, showcasing and exchange, which often saw new projects springboard into existence.

Closure of beloved spaces

We have seen the influence of the economic turn in the market with the closure of more than half of the much loved and successful artist led initiatives over the course of the past two years including Broadstone Studios, Basic Space, The Joinery, Moxie Studios, Mabos and Bio Space. Their presence in the cultural landscape of the city is already sorely missed.

Artist led initiatives often struggle with securing long term leases and investment, something that market forces are simply unable to recognise. Without thinking outside the box for creative ways to ensure cultural initiatives are viable options for the city, we risk losing more vital spaces for young emerging talent and for the city as a whole.

Rising to the challenge

We're inviting advocates, champions for Irish culture, interested patrons, local TDs, mentors and entrepreneurs to support us through this time of transition with advocacy, space provision and capital. We're looking for new partners who understand the value of social and creative enterprises, and who share our vision for sustainable creative communities for Dublin. We believe these independent spaces are not only necessary in times of economic decline, but also in time of growth.

Alternative and independent cultural spaces are what makes a city a vibrant, authentic place. Their programmes and projects enrich and diversify the output of Irish culture, which greatly contributes to its tourism industry and global reputation. More importantly these projects play an integral role in community development, offering innovative ways to nurture and support the talent of this industry that will help fuel our economy in the years ahead.

Our story of six years is a testimony for the need of such enterprises, and we see this echoed in all the support that has been shown to us by Dubliners, who have acknowledged BLOCK T's substantial contribution to the city, and have expressed their hopes for the organisation to persevere and grow. More than that, projects like BLOCK T are what make Dublin great, and we know it has a lot more to offer.

We would like to sincerely thank all of our collaborators, our landlords, the local community, members, and team past and present, for getting us up to this point, it's been a fantastic journey so far. We are now facing the biggest challenge to date, and are putting out an S.O.S to the city, culture is calling!

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